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ODP-0-025
7 January 1980

Mr. Robert A. Coyer
Assistant Commissioner
Office of Policy and Planning
General Services Administration
Washington, D.C. 20405

Dear Mr. Coyer:

Thank you for allowing us additional time to review and comment on a proposal (Project 79.62) to amend the Federal Property Management Regulations (FPMR). The proposal provides standard terminology for use in solicitation documents that require compliance with Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS) 60, 61, 62, and 63, the recently promulgated input/output (I/O) interface series of standards. The proposal also provides reference to FIPS Publication 66, Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) Codes.

We notice in the proposals that procedures for verification of compliance with FIPS will be issued by the National Bureau of Standards. We assume we will have an opportunity to review the procedures before they are published.

The I/O interface series of FIPS require that a waiver be obtained from the Secretary of Commerce before solicitation documents are issued. Approval of the waiver would be granted if, in the judgement of the Secretary and among other considerations, a major economic or operational impact would occur through conformance with the standard.

The requirement that waiver approval must be granted before solicitation documents are issued could be, in some cases, a detriment to the Government. One method of evaluating an economic impact is through the evaluation of responses to a solicitation. Also, one method of evaluation of new technology and its potential impact on operational requirements is through the evaluation of responses to a solicitation.

We believe that an agency should have some latitude as to when and where in the solicitation process it will request a waiver. Therefore, we suggest that the sentence in the four FIPS that reads, "No action shall be taken to issue solicitation documents or to order equipment...which does not conform to this standard..." be changed by deleting "to issue solicitation documents or." We also suggest that the proposed amendment to the FPMR's be changed accordingly to permit waiver requests and approval after solicitation evaluation. This approach would permit evaluation of all offerors, both those compliant with FIPS as well as those that are non-compliant, would provide more complete information to determine if there are significant advantages to the Government for acquiring a system that is not compliant with FIPS and would still be within the spirit of the standards program.

Sincerely,

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Chief, Management Staff
Office of Data Processing

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